

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1327

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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AMCONSUL BREMEN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 14218

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, GW, GE, SHUM, ETRD

SUBJECT: INTERNAL POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS FROM FRG-GDR
BORDER INCIDENTS

REFS: A. BONN 13914; B. BONN 13793; C. BONN 13606

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE INITIAL READING HERE OF DOMESTIC
POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT FRG-GDR BORDER INCIDENTS
IS THAT THE CDU/CSU OPPOSITION HAS GAINED LITTLE FROM
THE CONTROVERSY. ITS SCATTERED FORCES, SOME OF WHOM
ONLY NOW ARE RETURNING FROM HOLIDAY, HAVE EXPERIENCED
DIFFICULTY IN COORDINATING RESPONSE ON THE MATTER.
LATEST POLLS ACTUALLY POINT TO A SLIGHT DECLINE IN
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UNION FORTUNES. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH A NUMBER OF POLITICAL OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE THAT RECENT FRG-GDR BORDER INCIDENTS PROVIDED THE CDU/CSU WITH AN IDEAL THEME IN THE REMAINING WEEKS OF THE BUNDESTAG ELECTION CAMPAIGN, INDICATIONS THUS FAR SUGGEST THAT THE OPPOSITION HAS BEEN UNABLE TO EXPLOIT THE ISSUE. THE CDU IN PARTICULAR HAS FACED TWO PROBLEMS:

-- FIRST, IT STILL LACKS A COORDINATED POLICY IN DEALING WITH EASTERN EUROPE. THE CDU HAS SUGGESTED IT WOULD CONTINUE THE FRG'S DETENTE POLICY BUT OBTAIN MORE THAN THE SPD. IT HAS, HOWEVER, OFFERED NO ALTERNATIVES THAT WOULD PRESERVE THE GAINS OF DETENTE AND AVOID SOME OF THE COSTS.

-- SECOND, THOSE STATEMENTS AND PROPOSALS THAT HAVE EMANATED FROM CDU LEADERS HAVE VARIED WIDELY, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY A COMPARISON OF RECENT HARD LINE COMMENTS BY KOHL AND FRAKTION SPOKESMAN ABELEIN CONCERNING POSSIBLE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST THE GDR VIS-A-VIS THE COOLER LINE PROPOSED BY SHADOW CABINET ECONOMIC MINISTER STOLTENBERG AND LOWER SAXONY MINISTER PRESIDENT ALBRECHT. AS A RESULT THE GERMAN ELECTORATE HAS NOT RESPONDED TO CDU PROPOSALS. KOHL, ON VACATION UNTIL LAST FRIDAY, HAS BEEN UNABLE TO COORDINATE POSITIONS.

2. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POSITION HAS NOT BEEN HELPED BY THE ROLE THAT FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER HAS PLAYED IN THE MATTER. THE FDP CHAIRMAN HAS HELPED THE CHANCELLOR BY TAKING A FIRM LINE HIMSELF. THIS HAS FORCED THE CDU/CSU TO EXTREME POSITIONS THAT DO NOT COMMAND WIDESPREAD SUPPORT. SCHMIDT HAS ALSO EFFECTIVELY USED THE ALLIED ROLE. HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO INVOKE THE BONN GROUP TO SERVE AS A SCREEN FOR HIS ACTION, CONFIDENTIAL

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BEING ABLE TO CLAIM THAT HE WAS ACTING WITH ALLIED CONCURRENCE AND SHIELDING HIMSELF MORE EASILY FROM OPPOSITION CRITICISM.

3. NONETHELESS, THE CDU/CSU IS ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT CONCERNING ITS INNER-GERMAN POLICY. ON AUGUST 18 BERLIN CDU BUNDESTAG DEPUTY JUERGEN WOHLRABE DECLARED THAT HENCEFORTH THE FRG SHOULD

DEMAND IMMEDIATE PAYMENT FOR EXPORTS TO THE GDR AND OTHER EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, RATHER THAN EXTENDING CREDIT OVER A LONG PERIOD. TO THIS, SPD SPOKESMAN KURT TERJUNG REPLIED THAT "OSTPOLITIK" WAS IN THE INTEREST OF THE WEST GERMAN ECONOMY AND THAT EXCEPT FOR A SPECIAL INTEREST CREDIT VIS-A-VIS POLAND, ONLY PRIVATE CREDITS WERE INVOLVED.

4. ON AUGUST 18, "OSTPOLITIK" DESIGNER EGON BAHR

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1328

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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CLASHED SWORDS VERBALLY WITH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CDU/CSU

BUNDESTAG FRAKTION KARL CARSTENS IN A NATION-WIDE TV PROGRAM. CARSTENS DECLARED: "THE SOVIET AND GDR ARE SYSTEMATICALLY AIMING AT IMPEDING THE POLITICAL TIES BETWEEN BERLIN AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC SO AS TO CUT THEM OFF IN THE LONG RUN. ALL THIS, TO A LARGE DEGREE, IS THE RESULT OF POORLY NEGOTIATED AGREEMENTS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SPD AND THE FDP WHICH IN 1970-1971 AND 1972 ACTUALLY FULFILLED ALMOST ALL THE DEMANDS OF THE SOVIET AND GDR SIDE WITHOUT SAFEGUARDING THEIR OWN DEMANDS AND THE POSITIONS OF OUR OWN COUNTRY." BAHR REJECTED THIS ACCUSATION, POINTING TO THE IMPROVEMENT
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IN INNER-GERMAN TRAFFIC, TRADE, AND TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS. HE ALSO POINTED TO THE FACT THAT IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED THAT THE SUPERPOWERS PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN BERLIN QUESTIONS.

5. ON AUGUST 15, SCHMIDT, GENSCHER AND KOHL IN SEPARATE FILM CLIPS HAD DISCUSSED THE RECENT BORDER EVENTS. THE TWO GOVERNMENT LEADERS CRITICIZED THE GDR ACTIONS BUT DEFENDED THEIR POLICIES AND CHARGED THE UNION OPPOSITION WITH THOUGHTLESSNESS AS A RESULT OF THE REPORTED CALL BY SOME CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS THAT FRG BORDER GUARDS SHOULD RETURN THE FIRE. KOHL, ON THE OTHER HAND, REBUKED THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS INEFFECTIVE HANDLING OF INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS. A SUBSEQUENT CDU DECLARATION DENIED THAT THE OPPOSITION SUPPORTED THE IDEA OF RETURNING FIRE AT THE BORDERS, AGAIN EXPOSING THE DIVISIONS IN THE CDU/CSU RANKS.

6. INNER-GERMAN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN OF THE CDU/CSU BUNDESTAG FRAKTION MANFRED ABELEIN CHARGED LATER LAST WEEK THAT RECENT "OCCURRENCES FROM LUEBECK TO HOF" HAVE RESULTED IN A "DANGEROUS" STATE OF AFFAIRS. HE THEREFORE REQUESTED A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE BUNDESTAG COMMITTEE ON INNER-GERMAN AFFAIRS. THE GOVERNMENT INITIALLY ATTEMPTED TO FINESSE ABELEIN'S CALL BY ARRANGING FOR A BRIEFING OF VON WRANGEL ON THE CURRENT SCENE. ABELEIN, HOWEVER, PRESSED HIS POINT AND SO INNER-GERMAN AFFAIRS MINISTER FRANKE BRIEFED THE COMMITTEE AUGUST 24. THE RESULTS WERE PREDICTABLE: THE SPD/FDP CONTINGENT SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT'S INNER-GERMAN POLICIES, WHILE MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION CRITICIZED ITS

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STANCE AND URGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT NOT SIGN AN ENVISIONED BORDER SURVEY AGREEMENT WITH THE EAST GERMANS UNTIL THERE WAS SUFFICIENT INDICATION THAT EAST BERLIN WAS WILLING TO OBSERVE ITS TRANSIT AND BORDER COMMITMENTS.

7. RESULTS OF A WICKERT POLL TAKEN AUGUST 8 THROUGH 14, THE HIGH POINT OF EMOTIONAL REACTION TO THE CORGHI SHOOTING AND THE AUGUST WALL OBSERVANCE, SHOW THAT THE SPD/FDP COALITION ACTUALLY GAINED GROUND DURING THIS PERIOD. ACCORDING TO THE RESPONSE RELEASED AUGUST 16, 47 PERCENT OF THOSE ASKED SUPPORTED THE CDU/CSU,
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WHEREAS 44 PERCENT OPTED FOR THE SPD AND 7 PERCENT FOR THE FDP. THIS REPRESENTED A 2 PERCENT LOSS OF SUPPORT FOR THE CDU/CSU FROM THE PREVIOUS FOUR WEEKS AND A CORRESPONDING 2 PERCENT GAIN FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. MORE RECENT PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS RELEASED THIS WEEK BEAR OUT THE WICKERT READING. THE SMALL PERCENTAGE GAINS FOR THE SPD MAY NOT BE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT, BUT AT LEAST THEY SHOW THAT THE OPPOSITION WAS NOT ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM INNER-GERMAN PROBLEMS.

8. COMMENT: THE UNION OPPOSITION IS NOT GOING TO LET THIS CONTROVERSIAL CAMPAIGN TOPIC DIE, AND WE EXPECT THAT IT CAN GAIN SOME VOTES FROM THE GROWING SKEPTICISM REGARDING OSTPOLITIK. BUT IT APPEARS TO US THAT, BY ITS FAILURE TO TAKE EARLY CONCERTED HARD ACTION, THE CDU/CSU CANNOT NOW HOPE TO BENEFIT VERY MUCH UNLESS OF COURSE THE GDR CAUSES FURTHER PROBLEMS OR UNLESS THE CDU/CSU CAN COME UP WITH A COORDINATED POSITION THAT APPEARS MORE PERSUASIVE THAN THOSE IT HAS TAKEN TO DATE.
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